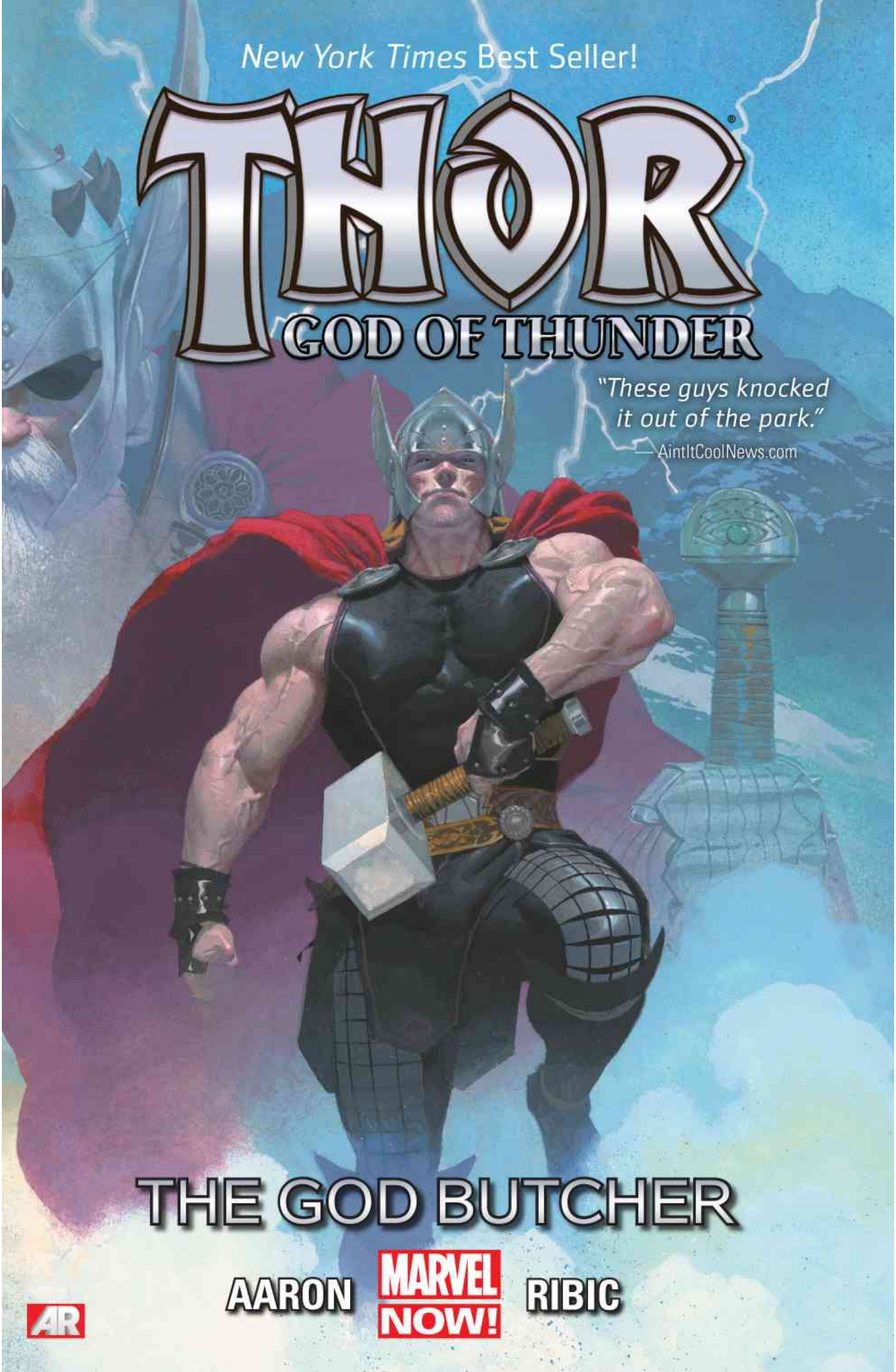
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THE GOD BUTCHER
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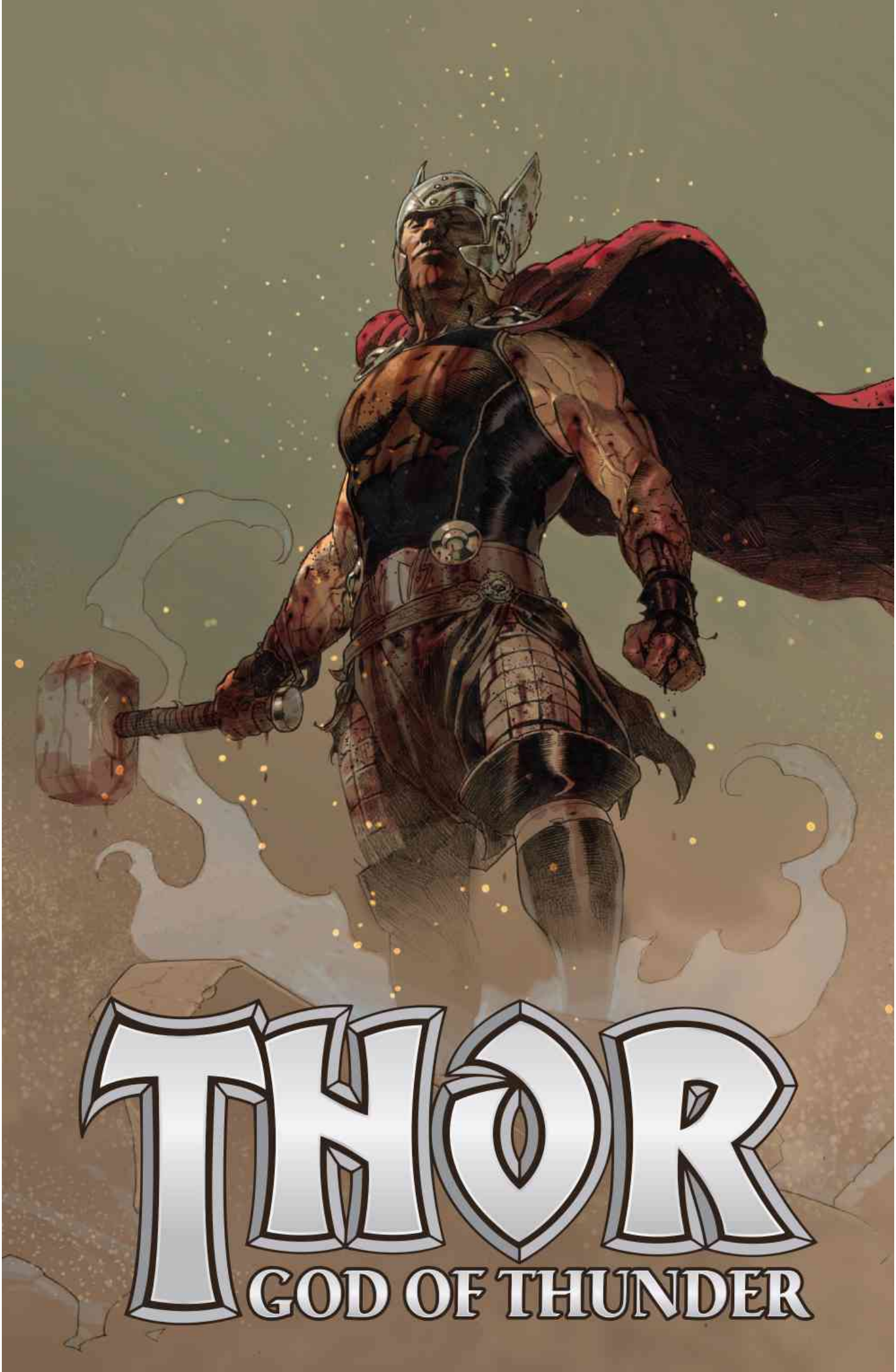
THOR
GOD OF THUNDER

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The God Butcher

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WRITER
JASON AARON

ARTIST
ESAD RIBIC

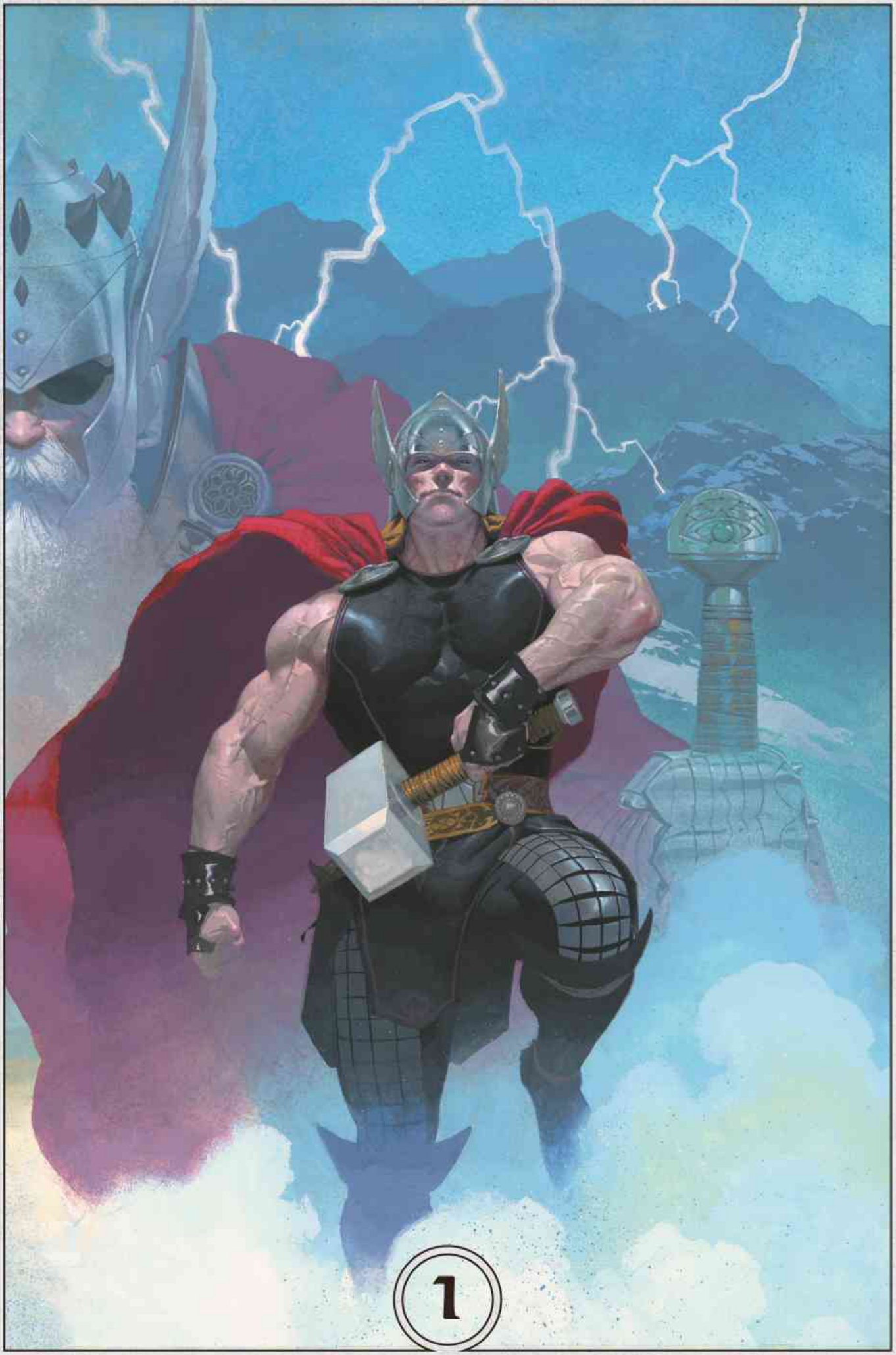
COLOR ARTISTS
DEAN WHITE (#1) **& IVE SVORCINA** (#2-5)

LETTERER
VC'S JOE SABINO

COVER ART
ESAD RIBIC

ASSISTANT EDITOR
JAKE THOMAS

EDITOR
LAUREN SANKOVITCH



1

A World Without Gods

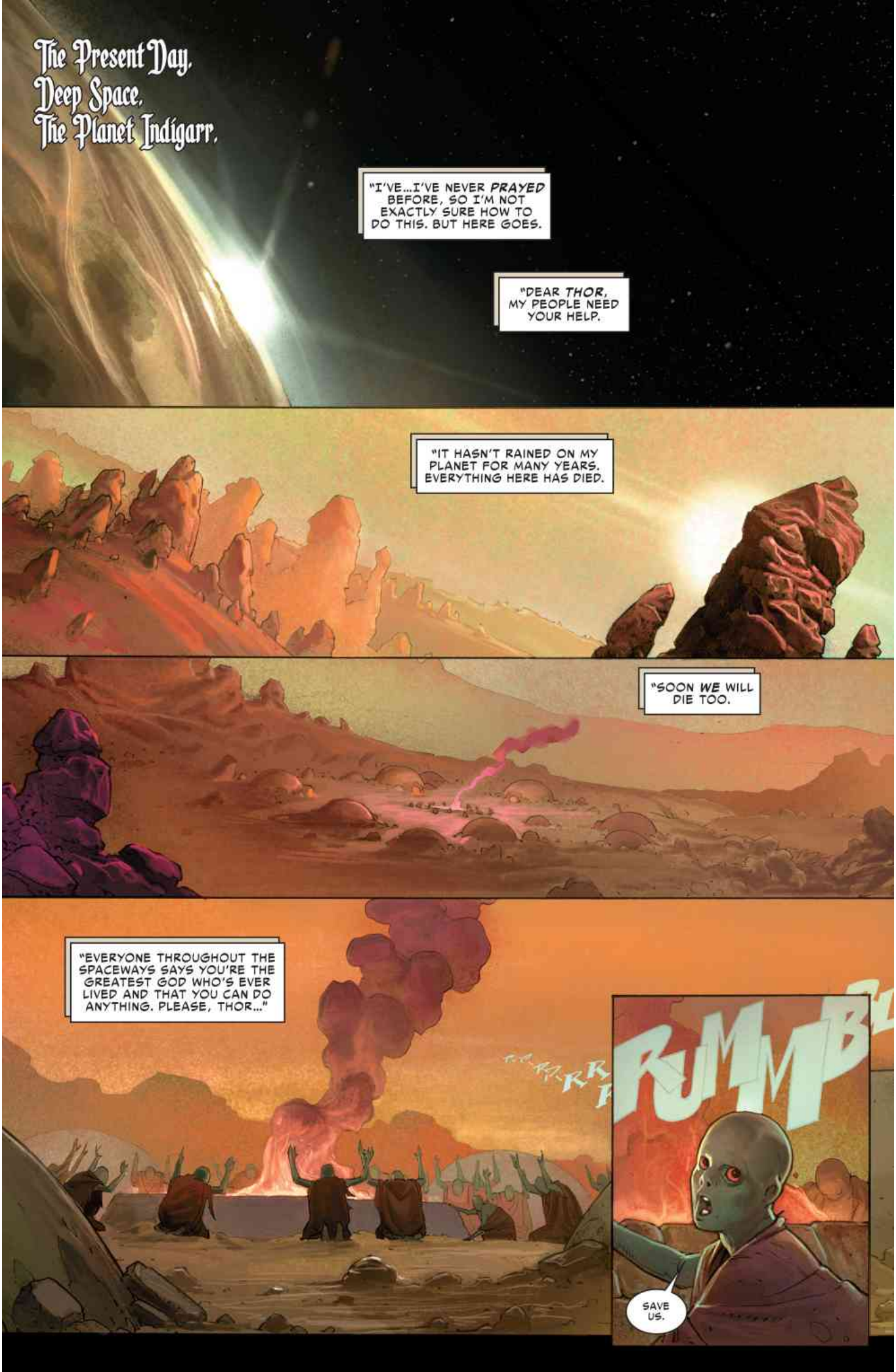
893 A.D.
Earth.
The Western Coast of Iceland.
The FROST GIANT had terrorized these people for weeks. It had eaten three goats, four dogs and two children.
The mothers in the village prayed for help from the gods. And help they did receive.
AR
I led a group of twenty men, tracking the giant to its den in the highlands. It battled us for hours, swinging trees and hurling boulders. Many Vikings found their way to Valhalla.
Until my AXE hacked its guts to bloody slush and lopped off its head.
That was four days ago. Since then I have eaten more goats than the Frost Giant, drank enough mead to drown a dozen sailors and made love to half the women in the village.
I am THOR ODINSON. God of thunder. Prince of Asgard. Heir to the throne of the realm eternal.
I LOVE my life.

AARRGHH!
A CRY IN THE NIGHT. PLEASE LET IT BE ANOTHER GIANT.
THERE'S SOMEONE IN THE WATER! A DEVIL MAN! I SAW HIS FACE!
THE GIRL SPEAKS THE TRUTH. THERE'S SOMEONE THERE ALL RIGHT.
OR AT LEAST... WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM.
RED CHUNKS HAVE BEEN WASHING UP FOR HOURS NOW, ALL ALONG THE SHORE.
POOR BASTARD MUST HAVE FALLEN OFF A SHIP AND BEEN TORN APART ON THE ROCKS. IS HE FROM OUR VILLAGE?
HEL, IT COULD BE MY FATHER FOR ALL I KNOW. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH LEFT OF THE FOOL TO TELL MUCH OF ANYTHING.
NOT SO. I CAN TELL YOU ONE THING FOR CERTAIN...

HE WAS NOT FROM OUR VILLAGE.
I HAVE HEARD TELL OF FEATHERED MEN SUCH AS THIS. FROM NORSEMEN WHO CLAIM TO HAVE SAILED ON ACROSS THE SEA, TOWARD THE EDGE OF THE WORLD.
YOU ARE *HALF* RIGHT, ULFAR SON OF ORN. OUR VISITOR IS INDEED FROM ACROSS THE WATER. BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE HE IS A MAN AT ALL.
LORD THOR, PRAY TELL...
WHAT DO *YOU* SEE WHEN YOU LOOK INTO THOSE EYES?
HE WAS A *GOD*.

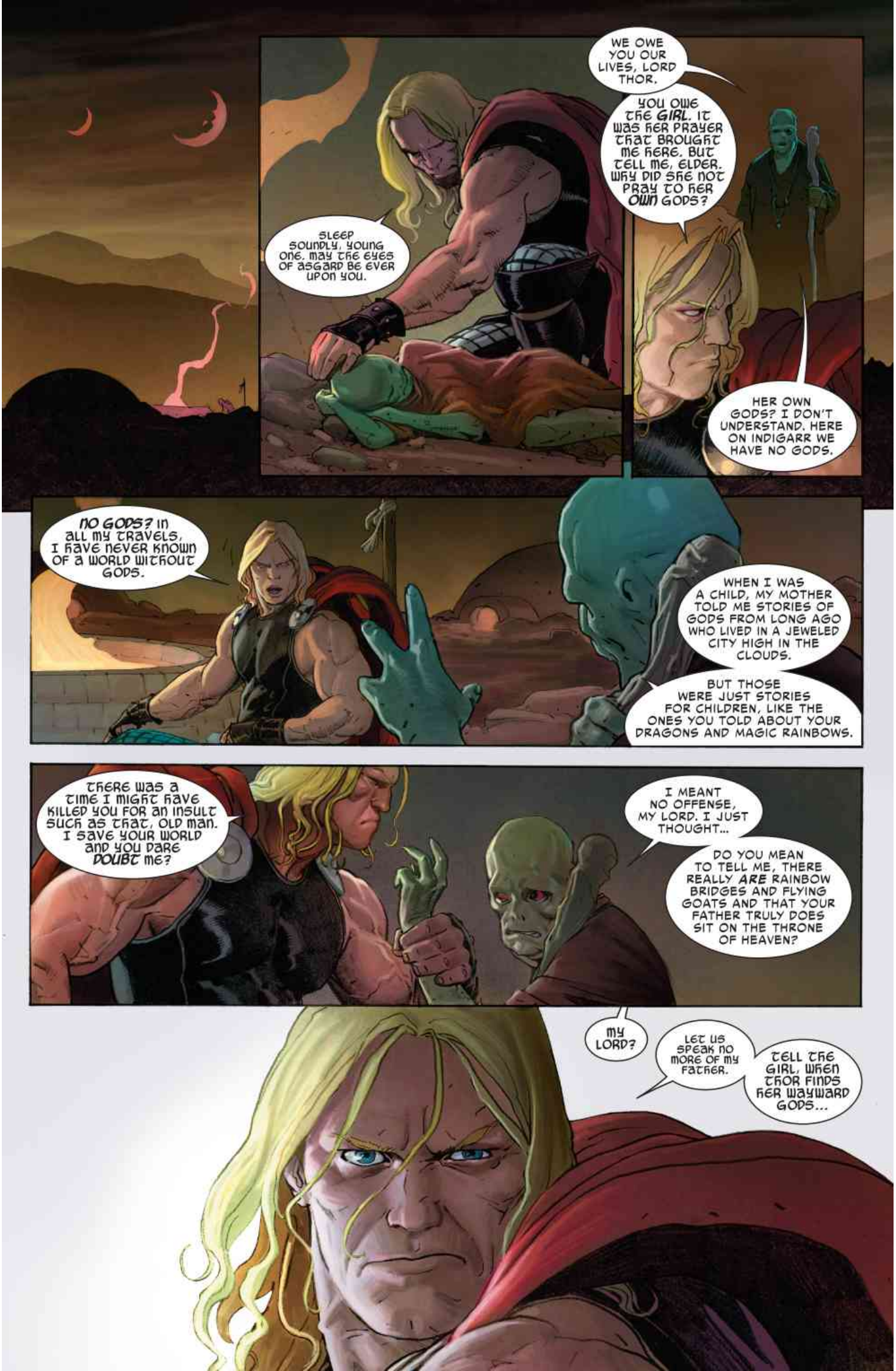
A GOD? ODIN'S BEARD.
BUT...WHAT COULD HAVE DONE *THIS* TO A GOD? EVEN A HEATHEN ONE FROM ACROSS THE SEA?
MUST HAVE BEEN A *SEA SERPENT*. ONLY THING IT COULD HAVE BEEN.
LOOK AT THAT FLESH. THERE'S NOT A BITE ON HIM. HE WASN'T EATEN. HE WAS *BUTCHERED*.
WHAT IN ALL THE NINE WORLDS...CAN BUTCHER A *GOD*?
WHATEVER IT WAS, I GUARANTEE YOU ITS SKULL IS NO MATCH FOR *ASGARDIAN STEEL!*
COME NOW, NORSEMEN, WHY STAND WE HERE WITH THE DEAD WHEN YOU'VE A LONGHOUSE FILLED WITH COLD MEAD AND WARM WOMEN? THOR FOR ONE HAS YET TO DRINK HIS FILL OF *EITHER!*
BOY.
FETCH SOME WOOD.
ENOUGH TO BUILD A *FUNERAL PYRE*.

A BUTCHERED GOD. TELL ME, MY LORD, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN ANYTHING SUCH AS THIS?
I'VE SEEN WAR IN THE HEAVENS. I'VE SEEN GODS SUFFER AND BLEED. I'VE SEEN IMMORTAL FATHERS SUBJECT THEIR OWN SONS TO TORMENTS YOU COULD NEVER IMAGINE. I'VE SEEN HEL ITSELF. BUT NO...
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THE HORROR IN THIS GOD'S EYES.
TO WHAT GODS DO YOU PRAY, OLD WOMAN?
ALL OF THEM.


The Present Day.
Deep Space.
The Planet Indigarr.
"I'VE...I'VE NEVER PRAYED BEFORE, SO I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE HOW TO DO THIS. BUT HERE GOES.
"DEAR THOR, MY PEOPLE NEED YOUR HELP.
"IT HASN'T RAINED ON MY PLANET FOR MANY YEARS. EVERYTHING HERE HAS DIED.
"SOON WE WILL DIE TOO.
"EVERYONE THROUGHOUT THE SPACEWAYS SAYS YOU'RE THE GREATEST GOD WHO'S EVER LIVED AND THAT YOU CAN DO ANYTHING. PLEASE, THOR..."
RRRR
RUMBL
SAVE US.

KRA KOOM
I HEAR THE PRAYER FROM A UNIVERSE AWAY. ACROSS THE COSMOS, I BRING WITH ME THE STORM.
BA ROOM
I CRACK THE GROUND 'TIL WATER GUSHES FORTH. I CARVE RIVERS WHERE ONCE WAS DESERT.
I AM THOR. WARRIOR OF ASGARD. AVENGER OF EARTH. AND I SWEAR BY ALL THAT IS HOLY...
NO ONE WILL DIE HERE TODAY.

YOU CAME. I NEVER DREAMED YOU ACTUALLY WOULD.
I HEARD YOUR PRAYER, LITTLE ONE. AND WHAT KIND OF GOD WOULD I BE IF I DID NOT ANSWER PRAYERS?
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME. THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE SOMEWHERE IN NEED OF SMITING WITH A VERY LARGE HAMMER. AND THOR IS ALWAYS HAPPY TO OBLIGE.
PLEASE, STAY. WE HAVEN'T MUCH, BUT WHAT WE HAVE IS YOURS. OUR COOKS DO WONDROUS THINGS WITH ROCK WORM AND SCAB BARK. AND WE BREW THE FINEST CAVE SLIME ALE IN ALL THE SYSTEM.
I'M SORRY, BUT I SIMPLY MUST...
...DID YOU SAY ALE?
SO THERE I WAS, RIDING A CHARIOT PULLED BY FLYING GOATS, WITH 300 ANGRY STORM GIANTS IN PURSUIT, AND ME LAUGHING ALL THE WHILE.
WHEN AT LAST I CROSSED THE RAINBOW BRIDGE AND BEHELD THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHT IN ALL THE NINE REALMS...
ASGARD.
GOLDEN CITY OF THE GODS. WHERE ALL-FATHER ODIN AND NOBLE QUEEN FREYJA TOGETHER RULED THE HEAVENS, SURROUNDED BY AN ARMY OF THE BRAVEST WARRIORS TO HAVE EVER HEFTED A SWORD.
ARE THERE DRAGONS THERE TOO?
DRAGONS? YES, SOMETIMES. PLUS ELVES AND DWARVES AND THE OCCASIONAL TROLL OR TWO.
BUT MOSTLY JUST GODS. THE FINEST GODS WHO'VE EVER LIVED.
MORE GODS THAN THERE ARE STARS IN THE SKY.


SLEEP SOUNDLY, YOUNG ONE. MAY THE EYES OF ASGARD BE EVER UPON YOU.
WE OWE YOU OUR LIVES, LORD THOR.
YOU OWE THE GIRL. IT WAS HER PRAYER THAT BROUGHT ME HERE. BUT TELL ME, ELDER. WHY DID SHE NOT PRAY TO HER OWN GODS?
HER OWN GODS? I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HERE ON INDIGARR WE HAVE NO GODS.
NO GODS? IN ALL MY TRAVELS, I HAVE NEVER KNOWN OF A WORLD WITHOUT GODS.
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY MOTHER TOLD ME STORIES OF GODS FROM LONG AGO WHO LIVED IN A JEWELED CITY HIGH IN THE CLOUDS.
BUT THOSE WERE JUST STORIES FOR CHILDREN, LIKE THE ONES YOU TOLD ABOUT YOUR DRAGONS AND MAGIC RAINBOWS.
THERE WAS A TIME I MIGHT HAVE KILLED YOU FOR AN INSULT SUCH AS THAT, OLD MAN. I SAVE YOUR WORLD AND YOU DARE DOUBT ME?
I MEANT NO OFFENSE, MY LORD. I JUST THOUGHT...
DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME, THERE REALLY ARE RAINBOW BRIDGES AND FLYING GOATS AND THAT YOUR FATHER TRULY DOES SIT ON THE THRONE OF HEAVEN?
MY LORD?
LET US SPEAK NO MORE OF MY FATHER.
TELL THE GIRL, WHEN THOR FINDS HER WAYWARD GODS...

"HE WILL SEE THAT THEY COME HOME."
A WORLD WITHOUT GODS.
WITH SUCH A MYRIAD OF PANTHEONS SPREAD ACROSS THE COSMOS, I NEVER DREAMED SUCH A THING POSSIBLE.
AS IT TURNS OUT...
IT IS NOT.

INDEED THERE *WAS* A TIME THIS WORLD HAD GODS.
SO WHAT THEN HAS *BECOME* OF THEM?
HO! *SKY LORDS OF INDIGARR!* A FELLOW IMMORTAL COMES IN PEACE!
SHOW YOURSELVES!
NOTHING. NOTHING IN THE AIR BUT ECHOES AND DUST.
I FIND A TREASURE ROOM FILLED WITH MOUNTAINS OF GOLD, UNTOUCHED FOR MANY YEARS.
AND AN ARSENAL STILL STOCKED WITH ALL MANNER OF WEAPONS. SWORDS RUSTING IN THEIR SCABBARDS.
BUT NO GODS.

IN THEIR LIBRARY ARE COUNTLESS SCROLLS FILLED WITH TALES OF THE RUTHLESS AND POWERFUL WARRIORS WHO ONCE CALLED THIS SKY CASTLE HOME.
YET I FIND NO SIGN OF WAR OR DISASTER. NO TRACE OF ANYTHING LIVING OR DEAD.
NO CLUE AT ALL WHAT BECAME OF THEM.
A MYSTERY FOR ANOTHER DAY, I SUPPOSE.
I AM READY TO LEAVE THIS CITY TO ITS GHOSTS...
...WHEN I HAPPEN TO NOTICE ONE LAST BUILDING.
A STORAGE HOUSE, BY THE LOOKS OF IT.
I DON'T EVEN CONSIDER IT WORTH CHECKING.
UNTIL I NOTICE THE CHAINS.
NO OTHER DOOR IN THE CITY BORE CHAINS.
KRNNG
I REALIZE WHY THIS ONE DOES AS SOON AS THE SMELL HITS ME.

HOGGSCARR THE HARSH. KRAWSKIN THE CRUEL. LADY VYLE THE GODDESS OF ATROCITIES. LORD ALL-BLUD THE INEXORABLE AND HIS THIRTEEN SONS BY THIRTEEN BRIDES. I RECOGNIZE THEM ALL FROM THE STORIES IN THE SCROLLS.
THESE ARE THE MISSING GODS OF INDIGARR.
THUS IS ONE MYSTERY SOLVED. AS ANOTHER IS BORN.

AN ENTIRE PANTHEON OF FEARSOME IMMORTALS. EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD. ALL BUTCHERED LIKE ANIMALS IN THEIR OWN FORTRESS. WITHOUT ANY SIGNS OF INVASION OR WARFARE. WITHOUT A SIGN OF COMBAT OF ANY KIND.
NO, TO EVEN CALL THIS BUTCHERY IS AN INSULT TO HONEST BUTCHERS.
THIS...
THIS WAS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

GODFLESH ROTS SLOWLY. BY MY GUESS THEY'VE BEEN HERE A FEW HUNDRED YEARS. UNDISTURBED UNTIL NOW.
NO ARMY DID THIS. NO GIANTS EITHER. NO STENCH OF SORCERY IN THE AIR. THIS WAS NO RITUAL. NO ONE-TIME EXPLOSION OF MADNESS. FLESH WASN'T EATEN, SO NEITHER WAS IT A MINDLESS BEAST.
THERE WAS NOTHING MINDLESS ABOUT THIS.

THEIR DEATHS WERE SKILLFULLY PROLONGED. THEIR SUFFERING RELISHED.
THIS WAS THE WORK OF ONE HAND. ONE THAT WAS STEADY AND ACCOMPLISHED. AND EXTREMELY WELL-VERSED IN ITS ART.
THERE'S A VARIETY TO THE WOUNDS. THE WORK OF MANY DIFFERENT WEAPONS. BUT NO SIGN OF A SINGLE ONE.
MEANING THE KILLER CARRIES THEM WITH HIM. LIKE A CARPENTER WITH HIS TOOLBOX.
THIS WAS FAR FROM THE FIRST TIME HE'D KILLED, AND UNLESS HE'S STOPPED, FAR FROM THE LAST.
THE FACE OF A GOD, FROZEN FOREVER IN AGONY AND TERROR. I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS SINCE...
SINCE...
OH HEL.
SHING

KA-BOOM
IT ATTACKS LIKE AN ANIMAL. NO SKILL. ONLY FURY. THIS IS *NOT* MY KILLER.
THIS IS HIS *GUARD DOG.*

HIS VERY STRONG GUARD DOG.
BOOOM
AR
I REMEMBER A DAY A MILLENNIUM AGO. A DEAD GOD FLOATING IN THE SEA. AND LATER A WINGED HORSE DRENCHED IN BLOOD. A CAVE OF HORRORS.
I KNOW WHO DID THIS.
KOFF
IF GORR THE GOD BUTCHER YET LIVES, IT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING...
MORE GODS ARE SURE TO DIE.

Many Millennia From Now.
The Great Hall Of Asgard.
THE QUIET. THAT'S WHAT I HATE THE MOST.
THE WRETCHED UNENDING QUIET OF THIS PLACE.
AR
THIS HALL USED TO BE FILLED WITH THE NOISE OF BATTLE, OF FEASTING.
NOW THERE'S JUST THE SHUFFLE OF THOSE THINGS OUT THERE, MOCKING ME WITH THEIR BLACKENED SILENCE.
AND THE SOFT, LABORED BREATHING OF A TIRED, OLD GOD.
DAMN THIS QUIET. IF I'M TO DIE, IT WILL BE WITH A WEAPON IN MY HAND AND A ROAR IN MY THROAT.
BRING ME MY ARM!
NO ANSWER. I'M SO DAMN OLD I KEEP FORGETTING... THERE'S NO ONE LEFT. NO ONE LEFT BUT ME.
I AM THOR ODINSON. KING OF A BROKEN ASGARD. LAST OF ALL THE GODS.
AND TODAY I WILL TRY YET AGAIN TO SEE VALHALLA.

I VAGUELY REMEMBER HOW THIS STARTED, SO LONG AGO. WITH A DEAD GOD FLOATING IN THE SEA.
AND LATER A LITTLE GIRL'S PRAYER, ON A WORLD WITHOUT GODS.
COME, DOGS! THERE IS STILL ONE GOD LEFT IN ASGARD!
AND HE WOULD HAVE WORDS WITH THEE!
AND NOW THIS IS HOW IT ENDS. WITH BLOOD AND THUNDER. WITH HAMMER AND SWORD. WITH ONE LAST STAND AT THE GATES OF HEAVEN.
THE ODINSWORD IS DRAWN! THE END OF ALL THINGS IS NIGH! DEATH TO THE BUTCHER OF GODS AND HIS BLACK BERSERKERS!
DEATH TO THE ENEMIES OF ASGARD!
WHATEVER HAPPENS NOW, WHATEVER MY FATE...

...KNOW THAT I FACE IT LIKE A GOD.